

Members

Rep. Scott Reske, Chairperson  
Rep. Vern Tincher  
Rep. Rich McClain  
Rep. Lawrence Buell  
Sen. Thomas Wyss  
Sen. Allen Paul  
Sen. Richard D. Young  
Sen. Timothy Skinner  
John Dahman  
Lt General Carol Mutter  
David M. Lucas  
Carol L. Riley



## COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

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### MEETING MINUTES<sup>1</sup>

Meeting Date: September 12, 2008  
Meeting Time: 1:00 P.M.  
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington  
St., Room 431  
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana  
Meeting Number: 2

**Members Present:** Rep. Scott Reske, Chairperson; Rep. Vern Tincher; Rep. Rich McClain; Rep. Lawrence Buell; Sen. Thomas Wyss; Sen. Richard D. Young; John Dahman; Lt General Carol Mutter; David M. Lucas; Carol L. Riley.

**Members Absent:** Sen. Allen Paul; Sen. Timothy Skinner.

#### I. Call to Order

Rep. Reske, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

#### II. Indiana National Guard Update.

Rep. Reske recognized Major General R. Martin Umbarger, Adjutant General of the Indiana National Guard (Guard) to testify before the Commission on Military and Veterans'

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

Affairs (Commission). General Umbarger gave a PowerPoint presentation. (See Exhibit A). He began by reviewing the composition of the Guard. He indicated that the Guard has 14,764 soldiers and airmen. The Guard also employs 551 state employees. General Umbarger stated that the Guard's infrastructure in Indiana is valued at approximately one billion dollars.

General Umbarger then provided an overview of Guard armories. He explained that some older armories have been closed due to elevated maintenance costs and because of a decrease in the number of enlistments. The armories closed include the facilities in Boswell, Attica, Darlington, Kempton, Portland, and Terre Haute. He also indicated that the armory in Lafayette has doubled in size.

Lt. General Mutter asked whether certain members of the Guard have had multiple deployments. General Umbarger responded that some members of the Guard have been deployed on more than one occasion. He went on to describe how the Guard was working to decrease multiple deployments by limiting involuntary deployments and was not allowing a service member to deploy more than once in a four year period.

General Umbarger stated that Indiana has the 4th largest National Guard force. The only states with a larger National Guard are Pennsylvania, California, and Texas. He then reviewed the strength of certain units. General Umbarger stated that the 122nd Fighter Wing is currently operating at 111% strength and the 181st Intelligence Wing is operating at 94.7% strength. In response to a question from Sen. Wyss, General Umbarger noted that the 181st Intelligence Wing was assigned to the United States Central Command (CENTCOM).

General Umbarger reviewed the missions of various Guard units. He indicated that the Guard established an Agribusiness Development Team (ADT). The ADT will deploy to Khowst Province in Afghanistan to provide assistance relating to improving the Afghan agricultural economy which, in turn, supports political stability and contributes to the reduction of opium poppy production.

General Umbarger then reviewed the Guard's family programs. The number of staff that administers the Guard's family programs has increased from one to thirty-two full time employees. He then discussed the Yellow Ribbon Program, which provides information, services, and outreach programs to Guard members and their families throughout the deployment cycle. General Umbarger summarized the pre-deployment and reintegration briefings offered to members of the Guard as well as services that are available to the Guard member and their family. General Umbarger then summarized the post-deployment health reassessment (PDHRA).

General Umbarger discussed the Guard's attempt to contact members of the 1/152nd Infantry. He stated that these soldiers may have been exposed to sodium dichromate, a known carcinogen, while guarding the Qurmat Ali water treatment plant in Basra, Iraq. He stated that 138 soldiers were assigned to guard the water treatment plant. However, as a precaution, the Guard has taken the position that the whole battalion of 660 soldiers were exposed to sodium dichromate. He stated that 10 soldiers of the unit have died from various causes since the unit returned home. He explained that this number includes at least one soldier who died from cancer, which may or may not have been caused by exposure to sodium dichromate. General Umbarger also indicated that he is aware of one other soldier being diagnosed with lung cancer. He stated that approximately 84% of the soldiers of the unit have been contacted. Approximately 50% of the 660 soldiers of the battalion have been discharged from the military since the unit has returned from Iraq. The Guard has been unable to contact some soldiers. General Umbarger stressed the

importance of finding the remaining Guard members in order to evaluate them and to document their potential exposure in their military records. The Guard has set up a hotline and has held town hall meetings to spread the word of the potential risk to former soldiers. Sen. Wyss suggested working with the Indiana Intelligence Fusion Center in order to find the remaining individuals.

Lt. General Mutter asked whether any of the 10 deaths were the result of suicide. General Umbarger stated that he believed that at least one death resulted from suicide.

General Umbarger then discussed the Indiana Guard Relief Fund (Fund). He stated that the Fund was established in 2004 from a grant from the Lilly Endowment. It is used to provide grants to members of the Guard and their families for expenses that may arise as a result of the Guard member's deployment. The Fund has supported over 700 Guard families. The Fund raised approximately \$70,000 in 2007. In response to a question from Mr. Lucas, General Umbarger explained that a service member may receive a grant up to \$5,000. In addition, a service member may also qualify to receive a grant from the Military Family Relief Fund. Rep. Reske inquired about the composition of the board that approves the grants. General Umbarger responded that he appoints the members of the board that approves the grants. However, he does not have any input in the grant approval process.

General Umbarger next reviewed the utilization of Camp Atterbury and the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center. He also discussed the Hoosier Youth Challenge Academy which provides guidance to at-risk youth.

Sen. Wyss and Rep. Reske complimented General Umbarger for his service to Indiana.

Rep. Reske then inquired about the Guard's ability to make arrests. General Umbarger responded that the Guard was not able to make arrests if they were under federal jurisdiction. However, the Guard could make arrests if they were under the control of the Governor.

### **III. Legislative history regarding the administration of the Military Family Relief Fund.**

Rep. Reske introduced Allen Morford, staff attorney for LSA, to make a presentation concerning the legislative history regarding the creation of the Military and Veterans' Benefit Board (Board) and the Board's authority to administer the Military Family Relief Fund. Mr. Morford summarized handouts that were distributed to the Commission members. (See Exhibits B and C).

### **IV. Discussion of proposed legislation concerning the Military Family Relief Fund and the Veterans' Affairs Trust Fund.**

Rep. Reske distributed Preliminary Draft 3113 to the Commission members for discussion. (See Exhibit D). Preliminary Draft 3113 authorizes the Board to transfer money from the Military Family Relief Fund to the Veterans' Affairs Trust Fund. Rep. Reske noted that language was needed to clarify that the purpose of the Military Family Relief Fund was to provide short term assistance. He also expressed the need to add language clarifying that the mission of the Veterans' Affairs Trust Fund is to meet long term financial goals and to fund the Military Family Relief Fund in a time of conflict.

### **V. Other Business.**

Mr. Dahman asked that the Indiana Department of Transportation be reminded why the

POW/MIA flag is required to be flown in rest areas. Lt. General Mutter then requested that the Commission discuss tax relief for retired military pay at the Commission's next meeting.

Rep. Reske then recognized Lisa Wilkin, representing Operation Firing For Effect. (See Exhibits E through I). Ms. Wilkin indicated that the organization advocates the passage of a resolution urging the Congress of the United States to provide full mandatory funding for health care for veterans. She explained that the Department of Veterans Affairs currently only receives discretionary funding from the Department of Defense's annual budget.

Lt. General Mutter clarified that the Military One Source program discussed at the August 26 meeting was offered by the Department of Defense rather than the National Guard.

#### **VI. Select next meeting date**

The Commission did not select a date for a third meeting.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

Rep. Reske adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.